

MILITARY GOVERNMENT CONFERENCE

29 August 1945

Jul

Lt. General Clay:

I think that when we get down to the subject of reporting we are getting down to the gist of what is good and bad in military government and what is good and bad about policies and instructions that you receive from topside. Nobody likes to make a report, nobody likes to read one when it comes in, and nobody can get along without a reporting system. All of you as soldiers know that the entire staff system is set up for the purpose of getting information which will enable the commander to make a decision. The commander who does not know as much as can be obtained regarding the enemy - how many troops he has and where they are - is in very bad shape. Most of you are business men in normal conditions and have spent a great deal of money in getting reports. You certainly want to know at all times what your financial condition is; you have developed a bookkeeping system, sales data, production data, and all the other data that helps you know just where you stand at all times.

Up to the present time I think that we who have been trying to write instructions to you have been operating in the same vacuum in which you who receive the instructions have. Of course, our aim is to issue intelligent instructions. In addition to that we have been condemned sometimes in the newspapers at home in isolated cases of military government because of the Nazis found here and there in office, and for various and sundry other reasons. We read reports from home that German production will be going full tilt before reconversion can take place in the United States - before our factories can be reconverted, - so they are sure of securing world markets. The why and wherefor of reports of that type lies in the information we can receive from people in the field. If we say that we have from 50000 to 60000 Nazis in jail, they don't become apprehensive about the one or two that we haven't put in jail. If we say that 3 or 4% of German economy is under way they don't know that that isn't enough to sustain German economy. If you don't tell us what crops there are we don't get enough food in advance to carry this country over its critical period, if you don't tell us how much money is in the banks we don't know what steps we have to take to make the banks solvent.

For that reason we have issued a directive on reports which is going to cause you to fill out more forms, going to add to your paper work, and will add to the red tape that we are always talking about; but it has to be done if we are going to do an intelligent job over here.

In addition, it is our endeavor to live in a goldfish bowl. Our responsibility to the American public demands that everything we do be made available to them. The only way we can do that is to place the facts on the table. Doing that job means a lot of extra work, and in the good old American habit you are probably going out now and doing that work yourself. We don't want you to do it yourself. We want you to make the Germans do it. The job of compiling the information and placing it in the proper shape for transmission is a job which you should throw on the Germans who are under your supervision. Some information is better than no information, and an incomplete report with adequate information or with estimated information, where you state it to be estimated, is much better than no report at all. And a report on time with that information is much better than a report that is two weeks too late to be consolidated with other reports. Therefore, get your reports in on time even if they aren't complete. If your estimates are not accurate, state they are not accurate; and above all get the Germans to help. If we make a mistake in sending directives to you based on lack of information or faulty information, then that is your fault not ours. I don't mean that if you send us good information we still won't make mistakes, but we will try to reduce them.

I don't believe there is any single job more important in military government than developing the flow of information, essential information, that may be made available for intelligent government, and I do ask that each of you who has a responsibility in this field focus as much attention as you can on the development of a system, within your area of responsibility, to achieve that end.

DECLASSIFIED
Authority NND 775042